

In the Claims

1. (currently amended) An outsole assembly comprising:
a heel region having an generally flat innermost surface, a generally flat ~~outermost~~ surface generally parallel with said innermost surface and adapted to be in contact with a walking surface, and an opening extending from said innermost surface to said outermost surface;
a footbed positioned over an area of said innermost surface of said heel region;
a plug combined with said footbed to provide a single unit and placed in said opening for enhancing comfort; and
~~a clearance~~said opening is unobstructed in a location at least partially defined by a bottom perimeter of said plug and a distance between said bottom perimeter and said outermost surface;
wherein said clearance permits said plug to expand and absorb shock.
2. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the footbed is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.
3. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the plug is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.
4. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the footbed and the plug are formed of a material having substantially the same hardness characteristic.
5. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the outsole is formed of a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 60A and 100A.

6. (original) The assembly of claim 5 wherein the footbed and the plug are formed of a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 30A and 60A.
7. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the opening is positioned in a heel region of the inner surface of the heel region.
8. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the plug includes a pedestal section and a cap section, the pedestal section being connected to the outer surface of the footbed.
9. (original) The assembly of claim 8 wherein the cap section includes an outer peripheral edge having an outer perimeter and an inner peripheral edge having an inner perimeter, the inner peripheral edge being connected to the pedestal section having a pedestal perimeter.
10. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 9 wherein the outer perimeter is substantially the same as the inner perimeter.
11. (original) The assembly of claim 10 wherein the inner perimeter is larger than the pedestal perimeter.
12. (original) The assembly of claim 11 wherein the inner peripheral edge forms a projecting lip when connected to the pedestal section.
13. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 12 wherein the opening of the heel region has:

an opening perimeter that is less than the inner perimeter; and
a corresponding matching perimeter for mating with the pedestal
perimeter.

14. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 13 wherein the pedestal
peripheral dimension mated with the opening peripheral dimension forms a watertight
seal between the heel region and the footbed.

15. (cancelled).

16. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the heel region includes
an indented surface corresponding to the inserted plug.

17. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 16 wherein the indented surface is
a non-contact surface with the walking surface.

18. (currently amended) A method comprising:

providing a heel region having a generally flat innermost surface and an
generally flat outermost surface generally parallel with the innermost surface and
adapted to be in contact with a walking surface;

extending an opening from the innermost surface to the outermost surface;

positioning a footbed over an area of the inner surface of the heel region;

connecting the footbed and plug together to provide a single unit;

placing a plug in the opening for enhancing comfort; and

providing a clearance ~~removing obstructions~~ from the opening in a location at
least partially defined by a bottom perimeter of the plug and a distance between
the bottom perimeter and the outermost surface; and

permitting the plug to expand and absorb shock within the clearance.

19. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising forming the footbed using a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

20. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising forming the plug using a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

21. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising using a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 60A and 100A for the outsole.

22. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising using a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 30A and 60A for the footbed and the plug.

23. (cancelled).

24. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising providing a pedestal section and a cap section in the plug wherein the pedestal section is connected to the outer surface of the footbed.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 24 further comprising forming a projected lip by connecting the cap section to the pedestal section.

26. (cancelled).

27. (previously presented) The footwear assembly of claim 28 wherein the footbed is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

28. (currently amended) An outsole assembly, comprising:

an outsole having an generally flat innermost surface and an generally flat outermost surface generally parallel with said innermost surface and adapted to be in contact with a walking surface;

an opening extending downwardly from said innermost surface toward said outermost surface;

a footbed extending over an entire said innermost surface;

a plug combined with said footbed to provide a single unit and placed in said opening for enhancing comfort ;and

a clearance said opening is unobstructed in a location at least partially defined by a bottom perimeter of said plug and a distance between said bottom perimeter and said outermost surface;

wherein said clearance permits said plug to expand and absorb shock.

29. (previously presented) The outsole according to claim 28, wherein said plug includes a first protrusion having a first periphery in contact with a lower surface of said footbed and wherein said plug further includes a second protrusion having a second periphery, where said second periphery is larger than said first periphery, in contact with said first protrusion and wherein said first and second protrusions extend downwardly into said opening.

30. (currently amended) An outsole assembly comprising:

an outsole having a generally flat innermost surface, an generally flat outermost surface generally parallel with said innermost surface and adapted to be in contact with a walking surface, and an opening extending from said innermost surface to said outermost surface;

a footbed positioned over an area of said innermost surface;

a plug extending downwardly from said footbed and into said opening;

said plug having a bottom surface and a perimeter around said bottom surface;

a clearance ~~said opening is unobstructed~~ in a location at least partially defined by said perimeter and a distance between said bottom surface and said outermost surface for providing room for said plug to expand and for inhibiting wear to said plug.

31. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 30, wherein said plug is integrally connected to said footbed.